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## The Daughters of Shiprah: Folk Healers and Midwives of The Great Plains

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# THE DAUGHTERS OF SHIPHRAH

## FOLK HEALERS AND MIDWIVES OF THE GREAT PLAINS

TIMOTHY J. KLOBERDANZ

Prairie folk healers and midwives seldom have been the focus of scholarly investigation, despite the crucial role they played in the settlement of countless Euro-American communities in the Great Plains. These individuals, a majority of whom were women, brought with them to the American and Canadian grasslands a wealth of folk medical knowledge and a variety of health-oriented, traditional skills.

Midwives and folk healers preceded the arrival of licensed physicians by a decade or more in many places. Unlike contemporary doctors, however, lay medical practitioners almost always were part-time specialists. Along with their other duties and activities, folk healers and midwives tended to the seriously sick and injured, delivered scores of infants, prepared teas and poultices, set broken bones, offered reassurance

to the discouraged and despondent, and sometimes readied the dead for burial.

In this article, I focus on female folk healers and midwives in three German-Russian settlement areas of the Great Plains: south-central North Dakota, west-central Kansas, and western Saskatchewan. Each of these ethnic enclaves is located several hundred miles apart (fig. 1). Until recent years there has been only a limited amount of social interaction between German Russians from the different settlement areas. The enclave in west-central Kansas is the oldest and was established by Catholic Volga Germans in the 1870s. The settlement area in south-central North Dakota was founded in the mid-1880s by Catholic and Protestant Black Sea Germans. The German-Russian enclave in western Saskatchewan dates back to 1905 and includes Black Sea Germans and Volga Germans, with representatives of both Catholic and Protestant denominations.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1976, I have done ethnographic and folklore-related fieldwork in all three German-Russian settlement areas on the Great Plains. During the course of my research, I was able to identify seventy German-Russian folk healers and midwives, nearly all of whom were female. With the aid of informants, surviving family

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members, naturalization and immigration records, county histories, and other corroborative sources of information, I obtained fairly extensive information about twenty-eight of the seventy folk practitioners. Of these twenty-eight individuals (all female except one), only five were still living at the time of my research. I interviewed all five healers, as well as many other German Russians who shared with me their insights, recollections, and knowledge of traditional health care.<sup>2</sup>

#### OLD-COUNTRY HEALERS AND MIDWIVES

Folk healing existed primarily within the female domain of German-Russian folk culture. While men occasionally did serve as bonesetters and magico-religious practitioners, it was far more common for women to adopt such roles. Midwifery was a phenomenon particularly dominated by German-Russian women and it was extremely rare for male villagers to engage in this specialized activity.

The German Russians considered childbirth a natural and relatively uncomplicated event, but anxiety among the women was generated owing to the ever-present possibilities of miscarriage, premature birth, breech presentation, postpartum hemorrhage, and infant mortality. Besides being experienced in various aspects of parturition, German-Russian midwives also were trained to care for newborn babies and their mothers. The German Russians traditionally believed that following a delivery the mother had to remain in bed at least nine days. Not until the ninth day of recuperation did the "bones come back together and the womb return to its place."<sup>3</sup> During the nine days of sequestration, the midwife cared for the new mother and infant, cooked meals for the other family members, and instructed the mother in caring for herself and the child.

While much of the knowledge of German-Russian midwives was based on pragmatism and years of personal experience, occasions arose in which desperate measures had to be taken. In cases of postpartum hemorrhage, for example,

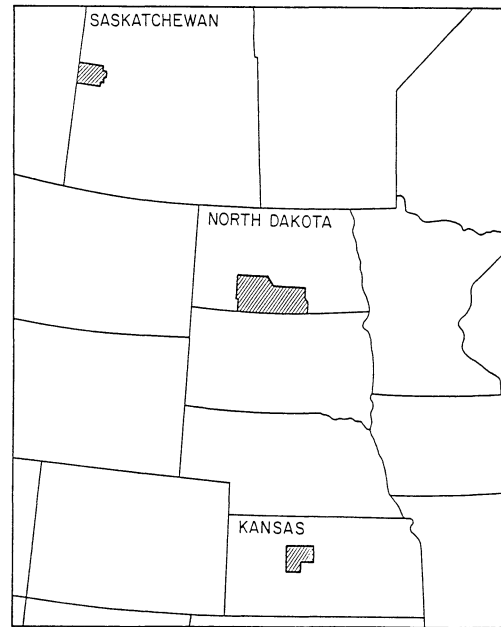


FIG. 1. The three German-Russian settlement areas investigated in this study: south-central North Dakota, west-central Kansas, and western Saskatchewan.

no amount of conscientious work or patience could check the steady flow of blood. At such times, midwives invariably resorted to magico-religious techniques. Many German-Russian midwives knew how to stop blood by reciting a rhymed verse that invoked the Holy Trinity. Following the utterance of the charm, the midwives usually traced three crosses over the afflicted area with their right hand or fingers. This type of supernatural folk medicine was known as *Brauche*.

Folklorist Don Yoder defines *Brauche* as "magico-religious healing, on the folk-cultural or traditional level, using words, charms, amulets, and physical manipulations in the attempt to heal the ills of [human] and beast."<sup>4</sup> Yoder's concise description aptly fits *Brauche* among the German Russians, with the important exceptions that nearly all German-Russian *Brauche* is

characterized by the use of the trinitarian formula ("Im Namen Gottes des Vaters, des Sohnes, und des Heiligen Geistes—In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost") and the making of "magical" crosses by the healer.

In most cases, German-Russian *Brauche* takes the form of verbal charms that are recited in German and range from only a few words to quite lengthy verses. Depending on the individual healer and the nature of the ailment to be treated, *Brauche* charms incorporate various motifs (e.g., roses, lilies, stars, the sun, the moon) and contain frequent references to religious figures and objects (e.g., Jesus Christ, Saint Peter, the Blessed Virgin, angels, the holy cross). Another feature of these magico-religious charms is their emphasis on *die heilige Zahl drei* (the holy number of three). The texts are permeated with references to such images as *drei reine Jungfrauen* (three pure virgins) and *drei Lilien auf Gotteshand* (three lilies in God's hand).

In Russia, local priests and ministers forbade German midwives to practice *Brauche* under any circumstances. Magico-religious folk medicine was equated with superstition and thus thought to be well outside the teachings of official Christianity. In many German-Russian villages, midwives were required to sign documents swearing that they would not resort to magic. Among the Catholics and Lutherans, German-Russian midwives were instructed to baptize (rather than supernaturally heal) dying infants. Since most midwives received fees from the local governing body for their services, the signing of official documents disclaiming superstitious practices was necessary. The regulation of midwifery by church and state authority was done in other parts of western and eastern Europe also. Indeed, the *Hebammenordnung* of Regensburg, Germany, is one of the earliest and dates back to 1452. In the Regensburg midwife ordinances it was specified that any "midwife who employs magic or superstitious methods shall . . . be beaten on her body."<sup>5</sup>

The penalty for practicing *Brauche* among German-Russian midwives was public chastisement and the withholding of community funds

for their services. As a result, the midwives and other German-Russian villagers seldom discussed magico-religious folk medicine openly. Women who were known to practice *Brauche* and midwifery continued to engage in their activities, despite clerical disapproval.

The fact that many German-Russian midwives signed documents indicating they would never resort to "superstition"—yet still engaged in *Brauche*—poses an interesting problem. How did these folk specialists justify such contradictory actions, especially after certain villagers became aware that midwives sometimes resorted to magico-religious healing? According to informants, German-Russian midwives did not believe *Brauche* to be superstition (*Aberglaube*) at all, but rather a special form of prayer. The more biblical-minded German-Russian midwives saw a connection between their roles and those of two ancient Hebrew women who defied authority. In Exodus 1:15-22, the Egyptian pharaoh, fearing that his Hebrew slaves would multiply and rebel, instructed Shiphrah and another midwife to kill all the newborn Hebrew males. The midwives did not openly question the pharaoh's command but neither did they carry out his orders. When the midwives again were summoned, the angry pharaoh asked:

"Why have you acted thus, allowing the boys to live?" The midwives answered Pharaoh, "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. They are robust and give birth before the midwife arrives." Therefore God dealt well with the midwives. The people, too, increased and grew strong. And because the midwives feared God, he built up families for them.<sup>6</sup>

Like Shiphrah, German-Russian midwives sometimes felt compelled to deceive civil and church authorities in order to make full use of their midwifery skills. If dishonesty and disobedience were necessary to heal and save lives, the midwives acted accordingly. The practice of magico-religious folk medicine by midwives,

however, was hidden from public view. Indeed, those outside the midwifery and folk healing professions knew little of the specialized skills of these women.

The fears of German-Russian midwives regarding the constant regulation and clerical scrutiny of their activities were not without basis. Many of the Germans who emigrated to Russia traced their ancestry to southwestern Germany, a region that figured prominently in the "witch craze" of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. Thousands of people were executed during this turbulent period in European history. A significant number of midwives and female folk healers were among those sentenced to death for crimes of witchcraft.<sup>7</sup> The official manual used by European witch hunters was the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Der Hexenhammer* or *The Witches' Hammer*), an incredibly detailed study published by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger in 1484. According to these Dominican theologians, village midwives surpassed "all others in wickedness."<sup>8</sup>

Officially-sanctioned witchcraft executions persisted in southwestern Germany until as late as 1749. There, in the Wuerzburg Diocese, "a 71-year-old woman . . . was carried, because she was too frail to walk, to her place of execution."<sup>9</sup> Scholars have explained the witch hunts that dominated pre-enlightenment Europe with a variety of provocative economic, psychological, social, and cultural frameworks. Recently, feminist scholars have provided a fresh perspective on the European witch craze by focusing on the persecution and eradication of midwives and female folk healers. According to Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English:

Through the witch hunts, the Church lent its authority to the doctor's professionalism, denouncing non-professional healing as equivalent to heresy: "If a woman dare to cure *without having studied* she is a witch and must die." . . .

The witch trials established the male physician on a moral and intellectual plane vastly above the female healer. It placed him on

the side of God and Law, a professional on par with lawyers and theologians, while it placed her on the side of darkness, evil, and magic.<sup>10</sup>

In the German colonies of Russia, midwives were respected for their skills but feared because of their secret practices. Centuries after the embers of the execution pyres turned to dust, suspicion was a legacy of the great witch hunts in Europe. In the Black Sea and Volga regions, the German-Russian midwife frequently was a middle-aged or older female. Upon hearing of a woman in labor, the community midwife (she was called by one of various terms: *Hebamme*, *Hebam'*, *Amfrau*, *Mitfrau*, *Umfraa*, *Altmotter*, *Grossmutter*, *Babka*) sped to the woman's home. Because the midwife was accustomed to cease whatever she was doing (including participation in church services) and hurry to the bedside of the expectant mother, some villagers believed she knew how to travel great distances by flying through the air. Midwives traveled fearlessly at night and thus could be seen walking alone on dark country roads and deserted village streets. Such boldness was feared more than it was respected. Many German Russians considered darkness the domain of witches, demons, and wandering spirits. Individuals who were seen outside in the late evening hours, especially older women, were suspect. A German-Russian proverb corroborates such mistrust: "*In der Nacht, sind alle Katzen schwarz*—At night, all cats are black."

In Russia, local officials and fellow villagers closely scrutinized the practices of German midwives. Despite the suspicion that surrounded them, midwives and other healers invoked the Trinity and made "healing crosses" integral elements of their specialized profession. Such ritualistic behavior angered the clergy but put the minds of many villagers at ease, for the German Russians believed real witches could not utter the sacred names of *die allerheiligste Dreifaltigkeit* (Most Holy Trinity) nor tolerate the presence of the Christian cross.

# GERMAN-RUSSIAN HEALERS AND MIDWIVES ON THE PLAINS

In the New World communities of the Great Plains, German-Russian folk specialists known as midwives and Brauchers were viewed with a mixture of awe and suspicion. Healers who functioned chiefly as herbalists, bonesetters, or masseuses fared far better in their ethnic communities than did those individuals who relied chiefly on magico-religious means of healing. Perhaps for this reason, most midwives and Brauchers were rather eclectic in their techniques and treatments. German Russians strongly linked *Brauche* and folk obstetrics. Not all midwives were Brauchers, however, and not everyone who specialized in *Brauche* was familiar with practices surrounding parturition. Determining which German-Russian midwives practiced *Brauche* is extremely difficult, owing to the fact that only a handful of these women are still living. Also, because of the secrecy surrounding *Brauche* (both in Russia and in the New World), few midwives dared to discuss openly their magico-religious healing abilities. In my interviews with the adult children of deceased German-Russian midwives, my informants explained that their mothers were familiar with *Brauche* but whether or not they used it was seldom known for certain. A number of informants mentioned that their midwife-mothers "prayed a lot" during difficult deliveries, but the precise nature of such "praying" was a mystery. Among many German Russians, both practitioners and patients frequently interchanged the terms *Brauche* and prayer.

During my fieldwork and subsequent research dealing with the three German-Russian settlement areas of the Great Plains, I identified the names of seventy folk healers with the great majority being Brauchers, midwives, or both. This number does not include individuals who functioned solely as bonesetters, "herb doctors," or officially-trained medical practitioners. In many cases, only the names and a few biographical details were known of these early folk healers. Sometimes, even the name was missing since the early Braucher or midwife was referred

to simply as the "*Hebamm*" (midwife) or by a fictive kinship term such as *Bas* (aunt), *Goh*t (godmother), or *die Mutter* (mother).

Individuals who became Brauchers had to learn how to do magico-religious healing from a more experienced and preferably older Braucher. Ideally, the ability to *brauch* was taught only to members of the opposite sex.<sup>11</sup> All my informants explained that this rule had never been rigidly followed by either themselves or their own parents and grandparents. The prevailing view that females primarily performed *Brauche* in the three German-Russian settlement areas I studied undoubtedly stems from the fact that German Russians on the Great Plains often linked *Brauche* and midwifery together. Healers who worked with expectant mothers had to know not only what to do in case of hemorrhage but also how to doctor sick infants. Quite often the treatments were magico-religious in nature. Even today, when traditional German-Russian midwifery on the Great Plains is practically nonexistent, Brauchers are sometimes sought to cure sick newborns and small children. Brauchers have a reputation for knowing how to diagnose and treat childhood disorders, including a number of maladies that medical professionals do not even recognize.

Women who functioned as midwives and Brauchers often learned their skills from their mothers or other close female relatives, and this family-based tradition explains yet another reason for the female-dominated character of German-Russian *Brauche*. In such cases, the period of training often began very early, sometimes while a female apprentice was barely in her teenage years. It was not uncommon, however, for an older woman in the German-Russian community to express an interest in learning *Brauche* even though she was not related to any folk healers. The period of training varied, depending on the potential healer's ability to learn quickly and the types of illnesses she wanted to treat. Generally, older women who acquired *Brauche* as a specialized skill could seldom treat as many maladies as healers who had "been raised with *Brauche*."

All five of the Brauchers whom I interviewed told me they had learned magico-religious healing from other women. In all but two cases, the healers learned *Brauche* from female relatives. The period of training varied for each informant, but all five women agreed that learning how to diagnose various illnesses and remembering the different German charms for each was the most difficult part.

In working with my data, one of the first problems that intrigued me was the extremely high percentage of female folk healers among German Russians on the Great Plains. Again, such gender dominance may be explained as a result of *Brauche* and midwifery often being linked or combined as a single profession. Even when German-Russian Brauchers did not function as midwives in their communities they were considered highly competent assistants during cases of childbirth. In *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles*, Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring argue that the culturally ascribed roles of nurturing which women often fill are the direct result of their potential powers of "fertility and procreation." Women and other members of society usually perceive such roles positively, thus allowing women to become ritual specialists:

The positive ritual roles of women require that women learn much esoteric knowledge to become ritually competent. Since women have much domestic competency, it is not difficult for them to transfer this competency and mastery to the ritual realm. . . . To learn ritual esoterica involves an intellectual commitment, an emotive relationship between ritual expert and novice, and a mystical individual experience or calling. Years of arduous apprenticeship and training may be required for the woman novice to become a medium, midwife, shaman, or priest. During this apprenticeship a transformation occurs, turning an ordinary woman into a sacred professional.

Furthermore, in analyzing the symbolic roles and ritual positions often held by women, Hoch-Smith and Spring point out that females whose reproductive capacities are limited as a result of barrenness, illness, celibacy, menopause, and so forth, often "symbolically rechannel their reproductive energies into helping other women bear children by becoming midwives or healers."<sup>12</sup>

This view, however, merely reinforces the popular Euro-American stereotype of the "barren woman" or "granny" as ideal folk healers. Hoch-Smith and Spring place too much emphasis on folk healing as a chosen profession, as borne out by my own research. Among the German Russians, healing and midwifery often were areas of family-based folk specialization. While a number of German-Russian women rigorously pursued folk healing following menopause or widowhood, one must be careful in asserting that such conditions are causal. The cessation of reproductive capacities may be no more important than economic constraints or the fact that many women were able to specialize in folk medical pursuits only after their own offspring had reached maturity. In regard to the "barren woman as healer" compensation syndrome, it is interesting to note that not a single one of the twenty-seven German-Russian women whose life histories I researched was childless. Only four of the twenty-seven women had given birth to fewer than three children. Indeed, the average number of offspring for the twenty-seven female healers was 7.5 children.

In the German-Russian settlement areas of south-central North Dakota, west-central Kansas, and western Saskatchewan, numerous stories are still told about prominent midwives and folk healers. These narratives emphasize both the amazing powers and the idiosyncrasies of female folk specialists. In North Dakota, for example, German Russians still speak of Salomea Dockter (1849-1935), a midwife and folk healer who immigrated with her husband and children from South Russia (fig. 2). Shortly after Mrs. Dockter and her family settled on the



FIG. 2. Salomea Dockter, an early German-Russian midwife in south-central North Dakota, poses (front row, second from left) with seven of her children and two other family members. Courtesy Emmons County (North Dakota) Historical Society.

North Dakota prairies in 1889, she gave birth to her thirteenth child in a wagon box. Eventually, the Dockters' isolated homestead became familiar to hundreds of travelers, including expectant mothers and persons seeking health care. The extraordinary kindness shown by Salomea Dockter is remembered by elderly informants, many of whom claimed she accepted nothing for her hospitality and healing sessions. Christina-Bas, whose husband managed to start a grape vineyard on the semiarid Dakota prairies, was another well-known midwife who delivered more than two hundred babies and "doctored" innumerable people. Her reputation as a healer was so well established by the early 1900s that physicians sometimes referred ailing German-Russian patients to her care. Christina-Bas, who had eleven children of her own, was admired not only for her "healing hands" but her beautiful singing voice as well. In North Dakota, too, Katri-Bas, the mother of ten children, was considered the most competent healer in a fifty-mile radius for the magico-religious treatment of *A'wachse* ("liver-grown," a culturally-defined malady). Informants claim that "sick children stopped crying the second she took them in her arms." Her remedy, like that of

other Brauchers, was to massage the infant while reciting a special verse that "worked like a charm every time." Informants describe Katri-Bas's deft hands as radiating incredible warmth and "feelings of real power."

In west-central Kansas, the Volga-German Americans still remember the early "folk doctors," even though physicians and medical facilities replaced the skills of these individuals relatively early. In Herzog (Victoria), Kansas, "Die alt Marlis Wees" (Old Aunt Mary Elizabeth) was a midwife who "fished babies out of the creek," carried a black bag, and had a little dog named "Bischof" (Bishop) who faithfully trailed behind her on her many house calls. In the village of Catherine, Kansas, Dorthea Beilman (1827-1915) functioned as a healer with far-reaching skills and alleged powers. Her particular forte was curing babies that were misshapen or crippled at birth. "In one instance even a medical doctor brought his baby daughter to Dorthea who corrected a deformed back and made the child normal."<sup>13</sup>

The German-Russian healers and midwives in the St. Joseph's Colony area of western Saskatchewan formed a relatively tight-knit "community of sisters." These women, who included both Black Sea and Volga German immigrants, learned from and supported one another in numerous ways. *Brauche* was a carefully-guarded secret and seldom discussed openly, perhaps due to almost constant clerical supervision. Nonetheless, magico-religious medicine flourished in private, safely hidden behind the clay-brick walls of numerous Saskatchewan settlers. Informants in St. Joseph's Colony still speak of early *Hebamme'* such as "die alt Wees Anna" (Old Aunt Anne) and "die Piffer Oska's Kat" (Whistling Joe's Katie). "They knew what to do if all else failed," a Canadian informant said of his people's midwives and healers, "and with faith and the good Lord's help they worked miracles big and small."

During the early 1900s, German-Russian Brauchers received twenty-five to fifty cents for a healing session. On the average, midwives



received three to ten dollars for delivering a baby and for nine days of cooking, washing, housecleaning, and babysitting at the new mother's home. In some cases, early German-Russian midwives received gifts of food or other items in exchange for their expertise. In Pfeifer, Kansas, for example, *des Lambrechts Fraacha* (The Little Lambrecht Woman, 1830-1914) was an extremely poor midwife who "always wore an apron with a big pocket on it. Whenever she was at a place where a small piece of bread was left on the table, she asked for it and put it in her pocket."<sup>14</sup>

According to informants, many German Russians believed that if you did not give the Braucher an *Opfer* (donation) after the healing session, "the cure wouldn't work." My Braucher-informants who accepted monetary (or other) offerings agreed with this view, saying that donations are earnest indications the patients "truly believe" in the power of *Brauche*.

Of the twenty-seven female folk healers whose life histories I researched, nearly half were married to nonfarmers. Quite often, German-Russian immigrants who had specialized skills took up prairie homesteads but eventually moved into towns where they could devote more time to nonagricultural pursuits. The primary occupations of the healers' spouses included blacksmithing, carpentry, plastering, milling, shoemaking, butchering, and janitorial work. It is quite plausible that the wives of nonfarmers who engaged in folk healing were more accessible to clients (since they lived in town) and these women devoted much time to *Brauche* and midwifery rather than to tending livestock, working in the fields, and extensive gardening. Indeed, in analyzing the family histories of numerous German Russians on the Great Plains, it appears that nonagricultural specialists tended to intermarry, just as *Bauersleit* (farm people) often did.

All my informants who practiced magico-religious folk healing considered themselves devout. As members of official church congregations, they saw no problem in professing their

belief in *Brauche* as well as in an organized religion such as Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism. In fact, their frequent attendance at worship services often accentuated their belief in German-Russian *Brauche*, particularly after hearing sermons that focused on the Holy Trinity, the healing miracles of Jesus, and the power of faith.

## CONCLUSION

Of the three German-Russian settlement areas in which I worked on the Great Plains, *Brauche* is now prominent only in south-central North Dakota (fig. 3). In west-central Kansas and western Saskatchewan, *Brauche*, like traditional midwifery, survives primarily as memory culture. These two settlement areas are primarily Roman Catholic and represent the oldest and youngest of the three ethnic enclaves. In terms of actual practice and belief, German-Russian *Brauche* remains strongest in the North Dakota counties of McIntosh, Logan, and Emmons (where there are many Protestant German Russians). These three are among the



FIG. 3. A modern German-Russian Braucher takes the hand of a female visitor while diagnosing a skin ailment. South-central North Dakota, February 1985. T. J. Kloberdanz, photographer.

most densely populated German-Russian counties in North Dakota. According to the 1980 census, German language retention remains fairly strong in these counties (in McIntosh County, 60 percent of all residents still speak German; in Logan County, 47 percent; and in Emmons County, 31 percent). I strongly espouse a relationship between *Brauche* and German language retention, based on my own experiences and observations while in the field. During many of my interviews in south-central North Dakota, German-Russian informants invariably shifted from English to dialect German whenever the topic of *Brauche* arose. In shifting from one language to another, cognitive and symbolic frames of reference automatically—and perceptively—seemed to change as well.

Secrecy and misunderstanding still surround the current practice of *Brauche* in North Dakota and, perhaps because of this, German-Russian magico-religious healing remains something of an enigma. Even as recently as March 1984, a “sermonette” written by a Congregational minister publicly denouncing German-Russian *Brauche*, its practitioners, and its adherents was printed in a North Dakota community newspaper. A few excerpts follow:

The supernatural part of brauchen [sic] is identical with witchcraft. It is merely disguised. Witchcraft attracts some, promising power over others and oppresses men by terror. . . .

Whether you are a Christian or not, beware of those who practice this kind of brauchen. Have nothing to do with them. If you are a Christian and have used them, see your pastor and with his guidance, confess what you have done and renounce the power of Satan.

. . . It is far, far better to be ill in the will of God, submitting to the lessons to be learned from suffering than to be healed by Satan and under the influence of his spirits.<sup>15</sup>

My investigation of the role played by German-Russian Brauchers and midwives repre-

sents only a preliminary one, particularly in terms of understanding the wider implications of this unique aspect of ethnic women's culture on the Great Plains. It is unfortunate that most of the female folk specialists who could have provided so much firsthand information—not only about their healing skills and midwife practices but about their individual lives and personal motivations as well—are gone. Despite such limitations, contemporary scholars must seek out every possible source of information so as to obtain a more complete and enduring picture of these women, who rightly may be called “the daughters of Shiphrah.”

#### NOTES

1. For additional background information about the three German-Russian settlement areas, see George Rath, *The Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas* (Freeman, South Dakota: Pine Hill Press, 1977); Norbert R. Dreiling, *Official Centennial History of the Volga-German Settlements in Ellis and Rush Counties in Kansas, (1876-1976)* (Hays, Kansas: Volga-German Centennial Association, 1976); and Rev. W. Schulte, *St. Joseph's Colony (Saskatchewan) 1905-1930*, trans. Lambert and Tillie Schneider (Battleford, Saskatchewan: Marian Press, 1976).

2. The full results of this research can be found in Timothy J. Kloberdanz, “Cross Makers: German-Russian Folk Specialists of the Great Plains,” Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1986. See especially pp. 175-268.

3. Numerous female informants noted that nine days of bed rest following parturition was the norm. This German-Russian belief also is noted by folklorist Iris Barbara Graefe, *Zur Volkskunde der Russland-deutschen* (Vienna, Austria: Verlag A. Schendl, 1971), p. 125, and researcher Jo Ellen Koerner, “Health Care Practices in the Life of Katherine Schrag Kaufman,” *Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia* 6 (Spring 1983): 50.

4. Don Yoder, “Folk Medicine,” in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folklife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 202-03. Also see Timothy J. Kloberdanz, “The Tradition of *Brauche*: Facts vs. Fallacies,” *Heritage Review* 15 (September 1985): 3-5. The standard German term for a female folk healer who practices *Brauche* is *Braucherin*. My informants, however, always used the term “Braucher” to denote a magico-religious healer, regardless of the individual's gender. To avoid confusion, I also use

the Anglicized plural form of Braucher (i.e., Brauchers).

5. Thomas Rogers Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 131. Also see Georg Burckhard, *Die deutschen Hebammenordnungen von ihren ersten Anfaengen bis auf die Neuzeit* (Leipzig, E. Germany: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1912).

6. This biblical verse was brought to my attention by two midwife informants who felt that it represented something akin to a religious charter of rights for midwives.

7. See Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1979), pp. 35-39; Hans Sebald, *Witchcraft: The Heritage of a Heresy* (New York: Elsevier, 1978); and H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).

8. Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Maleus Maleficarum*, trans. Rev. Montagu Summers (1484; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1971), p. 41.

9. Sebald, *Witchcraft*, p. 49. Also see Freidrich Merzbacher, *Die Hexenprozesse in Franken*, 2nd ed. (Munich, W. Germany: Beck, 1970), p. 49-50.

10. Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good*,

p. 39. Also see their book *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1973).

11. Alternation of the sexes also is important in transmitting occult knowledge among the Pennsylvania Germans. See Yoder, "Folk Medicine," p. 206.

12. Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring, eds., *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles* (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), p. 14, 15, 2.

13. Lawrence A. Weigel, "Dorthea Beilman: Pioneer Folk Doctor," *Ellis County [Kansas] Star*, 15 April 1976.

14. Letter, Lawrence A. Weigel, Hays, Kansas, 13 August 1985, to the author.

15. The "sermonette" appeared in the *Kulm [North Dakota] Messenger*, 21 March 1984 and was written by a minister of the First Congregational Church. Criticism of *Brauche* by Congregational church officials is not unprecedented. In 1929, a one-act play appeared in an annual publication of the German Congregational Church that ridiculed the prevalence of magico-religious healing among the German Russians. The script, written by Georg Marquart, appeared in the *Illustrierter Kirchenbote Kalender* (1929) under the title "Das 'Brauchen, Dafuer-tun' ist Suende," pp. 86-91.